

Test Your Marijuana Smarts (Quiz for Teens)

For whatever reason, there's a widespread misperception among teens today that smoking marijuana is a relatively harmless alternative to other drugs. But just how "harmless" is marijuana? Take this quiz to separate marijuana fiction from fact:

TRUE AND FALSE

QUESTION 1:

Marijuana isn't harmful because it's natural.

ANSWER:

False. Marijuana is not a harmless little plant. Smoking marijuana can lead to some changes in your brain similar to those caused by cocaine, heroin and alcohol and marijuana contains the same cancer-causing chemicals as tobacco.¹ It can also ruin your future, by getting you kicked out of school or off a sports team, or get you in trouble with the law. You call that harmless? And besides, the fact that something is 100 percent natural doesn't mean it's good for you. Heroin is synthesized from a chemical produced by the opium poppy. Cocaine is extracted and refined from the coca plant. These are two of the most harmful drugs known today.

QUESTION 2:

Unlike other illegal drugs, marijuana isn't addictive.

ANSWER:

False. Research proves that marijuana is addictive.² It's true that withdrawal might not be as severe as with heroin or other drugs, but research shows that people who regularly smoke marijuana have withdrawal symptoms—drug cravings, decreased appetite, nervousness, irritability, stomach pain, aggression and anxiety, among others.³

QUESTION 3:

People who smoke marijuana are more careful drivers.

ANSWER:

False. Marijuana affects the skills needed for safe driving: alertness, the ability to concentrate, coordination and reaction time. A study of patients in a shock-trauma unit who had been in traffic crashes found that 15 percent of those who had been driving a car or motorcycle had been smoking marijuana, and another 17 percent had both THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) and alcohol in their blood.⁴

MULTIPLE CHOICE

QUESTION 4:

Compared to cigarette smoke, marijuana smoke

- a) Is not nearly as bad for your health
- b) Is just as bad for you, maybe worse
- c) Is much worse for you

ANSWER:

B. Is just as bad for you, maybe worse

Marijuana contains the same cancer-causing chemicals as tobacco—including the deadly carcinogen benzopyrene—and at higher concentrations. Smoking four joints a week is the equivalent of smoking an entire pack of cigarettes every day, which even in the short term, leads to lung and respiratory problems. Long-term use increases the chances of tissue damage and lung cancer. Regardless of the content of THC (the intoxicating chemical in marijuana) the amount of tar inhaled by marijuana smokers and the level of carbon monoxide absorbed are three to five times greater than among tobacco smokers for similar amounts. A study conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles shows that the way smokers inhale marijuana and hold it in the lungs adds to the damage.⁵

QUESTION 5:

Using marijuana regularly:

- a) Can impair judgment and make a person more likely to get into trouble
- b) Usually makes a person mellow and relaxed and less likely to get into trouble
- c) Makes a person hallucinate and become dangerously violent

ANSWER:

A. Can impair judgment and make a person more likely to get into trouble

The popular stereotype of the pot user is the “mellow” label. The stoner in the movies is happy. He laughs a lot, eats lots of terrible food, and doesn't bother anyone. The facts don't support this image. The effects of marijuana vary from user to user, but the fact is, they're not all laughing. A lot of people don't enjoy the experience at all. Smoking dope can lead to anxiety, panic attacks, depression and paranoia.⁶ If you become a regular user, chances are you won't feel better over time: teens who become regular marijuana users are three times as likely to have suicidal thoughts than those who don't, according to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.⁷

Pot users aren't always mellow—and they're much more likely to get in trouble than nonusers. The National Household Survey also found that teens who frequently use marijuana are almost four times as likely to commit a violent act—either against people or property—than those who don't. They're five times as likely to steal.⁸ Impaired judgment can also lead to sex and make kids vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

QUESTION 6:

How long does marijuana stay in your body?

- a) Up to 3 days
- b) Up to 10 days
- c) Up to a few weeks
- d) Up to several months

ANSWER:

C. Up to a few weeks

Even after users stop feeling the effects of marijuana, the drug can linger in the body for a few weeks. That means it can be detected by a standard drug test long after its initial use.⁹

For information about marijuana, visit www.freevibe.com.

¹ NIDA InfoFax Marijuana 13551

² National Institute on Drug Abuse, www.drugabuse.gov

³ Alan J. Budney, Ph.D.; John R. Hughes, M.D.; Brent A. Moore, Ph.D.; Pam L. Novy, Ph.D. (2001).

"Marijuana Abstinence Effects in Marijuana Smokers Maintained in Their Home Environment." *Archives of General Psychiatry*, vol. 58, no. 10

⁴ Marijuana: Facts for Teens. NIDA. Revised November, 1998.

⁵ Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know. NIDA. Revised November, 1998

⁶ National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 2000

⁷ National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, July 2002

⁸ National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Report, November 2001

⁹ Marijuana: Facts for Teens. NIDA. Revised November 1998